

“Talking Points” for Meeting with Potential Partners

Why become a Project Impact Partner?

Businesses, associations and non-profit organizations are all potential partners. Following are good reasons why they should get on board with Project Impact.

- Businesses that are up and running quickly after a disaster are those most likely to stay in business. Some studies indicate that 40-60% of small businesses affected by a disaster never reopen.
- You may not be able to depend on suppliers after a disaster. Suppliers will be dealing with their own impacts as well as demands from other customers. By participating in Project Impact, you can help educate suppliers in disaster mitigation and contingency planning.
- Investing in an employee education program now for employees and their families will result in a higher percentage of employees being able to report to work after a disaster.
- Following a disaster, critical resources such as power, water and communications are frequently interrupted. Participating in Project Impact will help you take disaster mitigation measures and develop contingency plans.
- There is no guarantee that insurance benefits will be enough to cover all of the direct and indirect costs resulting from a disaster. Steps taken now will reduce the cost of recovery.
- Significant costs are incurred in post-disaster clean-up. This can be greatly reduced by implementing preventive measures now.
- Some small businesses may not have any resources to cope with damages. When businesses stay open, the entire community benefits.
- For a large business, a shut down of even one day could cost up to millions of dollars that are non-recoverable. Prevention programs make excellent economic sense.
- A moderate investment now will protect vital equipment necessary to recover post-disaster.
- Most utilities and many businesses have already prepared plans for dealing with disasters. Participating in Project Impact is one way to ensure that their plans are coordinated with other community hazard mitigation efforts.
- Participating in a community-wide plan gives the company a positive image throughout the community.
- By actively supporting prevention programs throughout the business community, you are contributing to a safer community.
- Even though your company may be protected from the next disaster, risk reduction measures on the part of your community decrease the risk of potential economic injury.

Take Some Time to Learn about Potential Partners

Before approaching potential partners, you will want to consider how you can motivate them to participate in Project Impact and what they can bring to the initiative. You will want to develop a clear message on why they could participate, what you hope to accomplish with their involvement. The following questions should help you develop this message.

- Who is the appropriate person to approach in the company or organization?
- Does the organization participate in other community activities? If so, why?
- What kind of staff expertise resides in the organization?
- What benefits will come to the organization?
- Is public perception important to them?
- Have they ever been affected by a disaster in the past?
- What are their vulnerabilities (direct and indirect) to hazards?
- How would their local sales and supplies be affected by a disaster?
- How would they operate if their employees were impacted by disaster and couldn't come to work?
- Do their operations rely on utilities, transportation, or other infrastructure that could be impacted by a disaster?
- What role do you want them to play?
- What resources can they provide?
- Have they already implemented any hazard disaster reduction measures? If so, are they likely to complement the community efforts undertaken as part of Project Impact?

Developing Win-Win Relationships with Partners

There are a number of ways to define a partner and many are specific to the partnership being discussed. In fact, the term "partner" is often defined in terms of donations. For Project Impact, a partner is defined as a participant, contributor, or a volunteer to the initiative. It is more important to inspire commitment to the long-term goals of the initiative than to achieve a one-time financial donation, although we know these are welcome. Because community change will be implemented, Project Impact deserves and requires partners who are in for more than one brief task.

It is important to look for ways to help benefit your partner while achieving goals in your disaster resistant strategy. Not only does it help motivate your partners, but it also helps them view their commitment as "good business." The best way to do this is take advantage of the normal function of the organization in the community.

For instance, the media is constantly on the lookout for news. Sometimes they are overzealous in reporting the sensational aspects of a disaster, but the media has the potential to be of critical assistance during a crisis for two reasons: the sophistication of their technical communications capabilities and the community's reliance on TV, radio and printed press for news. The media also understands their own responsibility to help create more effective methods to gather and send information out to aid the community.

Because good disaster mitigation relies on the media to provide specific information, perhaps the local publisher or cable TV owner could share knowledge about various technical systems for hazard warnings.

Thus, Project Impact damage reduction efforts are enhanced and the media is served by having timely information to broadcast. Most important, the public is served by receiving a higher quality of disseminated information.

The media will reap praise for providing accurate, helpful news when the time arises. In short, participation in Project Impact is a win-win situation for all.

Leveraging resources in similar ways with organizations such as utility companies, hospitals, and educational institutions strengthens both Project Impact and the institutions. These partnerships involve a high level, long-term commitment to Project Impact. Your potential partners are making investments of time, experience, creativity and more importantly their professional networks. True partners will embrace Project Impact and create momentum that inspires others to contribute as well.